

Leon Smith Flanagan

Leon Smith Flanagan, son of John H. Flanagan and Nannie Bathsheba (Seba) Smith was born June 2, 1895 in Farmville Township, Pitt County, NC and died February 23, 1959 in Greenville, SC. He married Eloise Martin on August 14, 1926. He and Eloise had one son, Leon Martin Flanagan.

It should be noted at the outset that Leon was called Len or Lyn rather than a harder Lee-On because of the soft North Carolina speech characteristics. Many people did not realize his name was LEON. He grew up on a family farm on what is still called the "old plank road." His father called the farm "Cherry Hill." He had eleven brothers and sisters and they all worked on the farm. His father and mother doted on the children and they must have had a wonderful time growing up. His father provided a two horse carriage for the children to drive to school. Leon was especially close to his sister, Thelma.

Leon went through school in Farmville, graduating from high school shortly before WW I and it wasn't long before he joined the army in what would eventually become the air corps. He went to Camp Oglethorpe, Georgia for OCS training, finishing as a 2nd Lt. His further training was at Camp McArthur, Waco, Texas where he became a flying artillery observer.

Following training at Camp MacArthur, he was shipped to Brest, France and then on to an airfield just behind the front lines. His assignment was to fly as an observer in a biplane (in the front seat) over the front lines for the purpose of directing artillery fire. (Since there was no radio communication at that time, it is assumed that the plane would have to return to its base and then communicate the observations to the artillery unit by wire).

He was in France on Armistice Day, November 11, 1919. He was 24 years old. He told a story about the Armistice Day celebration at the air field where he was stationed. Some of the pilots, along with their observers, went up in the biplanes and celebrated by doing aerobatics. The engine on the plane he was in failed while the pilot was trying to land. He thought the plane would crash, so he jumped out at tree top level. He said he hit every limb on the tree on the way down and that he was bruised and sore but had no broken bones or serious injury. The pilot stayed with the plane and was killed in the crash.

He was discharged at Camp (now Fort) Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina on July 17, 1920. He stayed in Columbia, South Carolina and worked with his older brother, Claude, filling orders at a wholesale grocery house. He also attended University of South Carolina for two years.

One of his co-workers at the wholesale grocery warehouse was J. P. Stevenson who asked him to invest one-third of the cost of two corner grocery stores. The investment was \$100 (the sale price being a total of \$300). He said that he did not have, and had never even